

Garden expert's journey in time

by Lyn Taylor

"Working the soil. I like the smell of it – the rich mouldy smell of newly turned earth.

"I like the sound of it – the thwack of the spade, the thump of the sods, the wingbeats of birds come to investigate".

These are the carefully crafted words of writer and historian Katherine Swift, creator of a fascinating sequence of historical gardens at the Dower House in Morville.

Katherine, who came to live in Morville some 20 years ago, has just had her third book published.

Visual

A beautifully written and evocative narrative, 'The Morville Hours - the Story of a Garden', takes the reader on a unique journey through time.

The work is structured like a medieval Book of Hours (a guideline for monks on how to pray at different times of the day) and reflects the monastic past of the Dower House, which is part of Morville Hall.

It explains how Katherine created the stunning Dower House garden as a visual lesson in English history.

But this unusual book also travels backwards through the centuries, back to the forces which shaped the garden, linking Katherine's personal triumphs and tragedies to the lives of others who lived in the same Shropshire house.

It tells the story of the soil and the streams which nurture it and spans thousands of years, providing a scholarly and yet entertaining documentation of both the garden and the various occupants of Dower

House.

Each chapter of the book is named after one of the Hours of Divine Office and summons vividly to life an hour of the day or night in the garden of today, or the gardens of the distant past.

Beautifully illustrated, the hardback copy will make a welcome addition to the bookshelves of anyone with an interest in gardening or history.

The Morville Hours is already receiving wide acclaim, and has been chosen as Radio 4 Book of the Week, for the week beginning May 5.

Proprietor of Wenlock Books, Anna Dreda, has described Katherine's work as "a personal, spiritual and historical journey . . . a beautifully written, wonderful book".

Anyone wants to meet Katherine can do so at the Morville Flower Festival on Saturday, May 3, Sunday, May 4 and Monday, May 5. She will be making two appearances on each of these dates, at 12 noon and 3pm.

Columnist

Katherine's previous books are 'Preserving Our Printed Heritage: Long Room Project at Trinity College Dublin, which she wrote with Anthony Cains, and 'Pergolas, Arbours and Arches: Their History and How to Make Them' with Paul Edwards and Jessica Smith.

Katherine worked as a rare book librarian in Oxford and Dublin before becoming a full-time gardener and writer in 1988. For four years she was the gardening columnist of the Times, and has written widely for the specialist garden press.

